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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Ninth periodic report submitted by Guyana under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2016*

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADF	Amerindian Development Fund
AHU	Adolescent Health Unit
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIS	AIDS Indicator Survey
AMR	Annual Ministerial Review
APNU-AFC	A Partnership for National Unity — Alliance for Change
APP	Amerindian People's Plan
AVC	Amerindian Village Council
BIT	Board of Industrial Training
BOS	Bureau of Statistics
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CAT	Convention against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or degrading treatment or Punishment
CCJ	Caribbean Court of Justice
CCPA	Childcare Protection Agency
CCPR	Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CDC	Community Development Council
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CHW	Community Health Worker
CO	Concluding Observations
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSME	Caribbean Single Market and Economy
CSPro	Census and Survey Processing System
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECOSOC	United Nations' Economic and Social Council
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERC	Ethnic Relations Commission
ERT	Equal Rights Trust
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
GAWL	Guyana Association of Women Lawyers
GAWU	Guyana Agricultural Workers Union
GBTI	Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

GGMC	Guyana Geology and Mines Commission
GLAC	Guyana Legal Aid Clinic
GOG	Government of Guyana
GPF	Guyana Police Force
GPHC	Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation
GRPA	Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association
GRO	General Register Office
GUYSUCO	Guyana Sugar Cooperation
GWLI	Guyana Women's Leadership Institute
GYD	Guyana dollars
HDI	Human Development Index
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRC	Human Rights Commission
HSP	Hinterland Scholarship Programme
ICM	International Confederation of Midwives
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Indigenous Peoples
IPC	Indigenous Peoples' Commission
IPED	Institute of Private Enterprise Development
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
KKTC	Kuru Kuru Training Centre
LCDS	Low Carbon Development Strategy
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer
LGE	Local Government Elections
MAB	Men's Affairs Bureau
MCH	Maternal Child Health
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOC	Ministry of Communities
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance

MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOIPA	Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs
MOLA	Ministry of Legal Affairs
MOPS	Ministry of Public Security
MOSC	Ministry of Social Cohesion
MOSP	Ministry of Social Protection
NDCs	Neighbourhood Democratic Councils
NGO(s)	Non-governmental organization(s)
NTC	National Toshaos Council
NTFCTP	National Task Force for Combating Trafficking in Persons
NTFPSV	National Task Force for the Prevention of Sexual Violence
NTPYE	National Training Project for Youth Empowerment
OAS	Organisation of the American States
OB/GYN	Obstetrics and Gynaecology
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PAP	Public Assistance Programme
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PPP/C	Peoples Progressive Party Civic
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSSC	Parliamentary Special Select Committee
REDD	Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RCC	Rights of the Child Commission
RDCs	Regional Democratic Councils
RWAC	Regional Women's Affairs Committee
SCP	Special Circumstances Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SKYE	Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment
SOA	Sexual Offences Act
SPAP	Single Parent Assistance Programme
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TIPS	Trafficking in Persons
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UG	University of Guyana
UGCGS	University of Guyana Centre for Gender Studies
UK	United Kingdom
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UN-WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States dollars
WAB	Women Affairs Bureau
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WGEC	Women and Gender Equality Commission
WOW	Women of Worth
YEAP	Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme
YEI	Youth Empowerment Initiative

Introduction

1. The Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana as a State Party to the Convention has the honour to submit this its ninth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in the legislative, judicial, administrative spheres as well as other key measures adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and the Millennium Development Goals for the period 2011–2015. This report was prepared in accordance with Article 18 and the guidelines set out by the Committee relating to the form and content of reports submitted by the States Parties under the guidance of the Gender Unit, Ministry of Social Protection (previously Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security). The Ministries of Legal Affairs and Foreign Affairs have provided invaluable feedback and guidance in the preparation of this Report.

2. The preparation of this report began soon after a change of government following national elections in May 2015. The new coalition (APNU+AFC) Government of Guyana is keen to properly address all forms of discrimination against women and engaged a wide cross-section of stakeholders in the preparation of the report. It is based on information about key measures adopted and indicates factors and difficulties affecting the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that were submitted by relevant Government ministries, public bodies, agencies, constitutional commissions and non-governmental organisations working on women's issues and human rights. The final report has been disseminated to key stakeholders and reviewed by the Executive of Guyana.

3. The report has three main parts: Part I provides general information and the national framework for the protection and promotion of human rights; Part II responds to the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee regarding the seventh and eighth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/GUY/CO/7-8) considered on 10 July 2012 and Part III reports on remaining Articles of the Convention for the period under review.

Part I: General Information and Framework for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

The Land and People

4. There is little difference in the gender distribution of the population; women comprise 50.2 percent and men 49.7 percent. During the period 2002–2012 there had been a slight shift with women outnumbering men, compared to previously when the reverse occurred.[1] The total population below 15 years is 30 percent; with boys accounting for 15.2 percent and girls with a slightly less proportion of 14.8 percent; the 15–64 age cohort accounts for a significantly large proportion (65 percent) of the population with approximately even proportions of men and women. Statistics also indicate that women have a higher survival rate than men. According to WHO life expectancy is 66.2, with males reaching 63.9 and females reaching 68.5 years old.[2] The elderly population (65 years and over) comprise 5 percent, with women accounting for 2.8 percent, while men are 2.3 percent. A significant feature of the population is that most youth, both male and female reside in the rural areas.[3] The

[1] Ibid, p. 47.

[2] WHO Health Rankings, 2014, http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/guyana-life-expectancy.

[3] Preliminary Report, Guyana Population and Housing Census 2012, (p. 37) Bureau of Statistics, Guyana.

number of rural youth is significantly higher in the pre-adolescent (10–14 years) category.[4]

5. In general, all citizens regardless of ethnicity, gender, age and ableness enjoy de jure recognition, protection, and promotion of human rights in all geographic areas within the country. Although improvement is needed, women and girls are encouraged to pursue their ambitions, and their achievements are celebrated in the society, community, and village.

6. One of the main challenges that faced Guyana has been high unemployment, especially among young people and in rural areas. With youth making up more than 60 percent of Guyana's population, the youth unemployment issue is of importance. Since 2002, youth unemployment has been consistently higher than 30 percent and is currently estimated to be about 40 percent (Caribbean Development Bank, 2015). The level of unemployment is one of the causes for high levels of emigration to other countries in the Caribbean, USA, Canada and the UK. Chronic problems related to the labour market include a shortage of skilled labour and uneven infrastructural development.

7. Within the period of review, Guyana has shown a slight change in labour force participation with a minimum average of 61.3 percent in 2011 and 2014 and maximum average of 61.4 percent in 2012 to 2013. From a gender perspective, women's labour participation increased from 41.6 percent in 2011 to 42.9 percent in 2014, while men's labour participation declined by 1.2 percent from 81.2 percent in 2011 to 80.0 percent in 2014. The loss of skilled labour to emigration also depletes government's and other organisations' institutional capacity to effectively execute their own developmental programmes. This is especially evident in the rural and hinterland areas, as municipal and regional government administrations have been particularly weakened by the historical concentration of developmental activities in and around the capital city. According to the Bureau of Statistics, the migration within the country is dominated by women and "the preponderance of females in the migration process may be explained by the avocation of gender equality in the country, where women's traditional role mainly in home duties has been decreasing, and women are now competing with men in job places."[5] While Guyana's high emigration rate deprives the country of professionals in key sectors it also contributes to high levels of remittances to the country.[6]

The Status of Women

8. The individual rights of all citizens, women, men, girls and boys with permanent or temporary residence within the jurisdiction of Guyana, are protected under the Constitution. The principle of equality and non-discrimination is enshrined in Article 149 of the revised Constitution and the articles guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms of people living in the state. Specifically, Article 149E assures women's equal rights and status with men in political, economic, cultural and social life; their equal access with men to academic, vocational and professional training and equal opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion. This Article unequivocally states that 'all forms of discrimination against women on the basis of gender and sex are illegal'.

9. Section 11B of the Representation of People's Act, Chapter 1:03 allows for the inclusive participation of women in decision-making processes, if at least one-third of the list of representatives of each political party wishing to contest the national and

[4] Ibid.

[5] Guyana Population and Housing Census, 2007, (p.61) Bureau of Statistics, Guyana.

[6] According to the World Factbook more than 55 percent of the country's citizens live abroad https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gy.html.

local elections must be women. In the recently held LGE women actively participated as voters and contested seats in the municipalities and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils. Women occupy 33 percent of seats in municipalities compared to 30 percent prior to elections; and women councillors of the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils improved slightly to 30 percent compared to 29 percent prior to elections. Women are also very active in public life as elaborated in Part II and III.

10. In 2000 Guyana adopted the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in 2015 committed to the Sustainable Development Goals. Under the MDGs framework, UNDP reported that Guyana had met its targets set for education, water, sanitation and HIV/AIDS. The MDGs report[7] further stated that Guyana's progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women had been very good. The country has met the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education.

11. The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap reports provide a useful framework for understanding the status of women in Guyana when compared to neighbouring countries — Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname and Venezuela. The overall ranking is compiled from four Gender Gap sub-indexes: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. Table 1 shows comparative data from five selected countries. Guyana's political empowerment ranking was strong at 28 among 135 countries in 2011, but slowly declined to its lowest at 37 among 145 countries in 2015. Among its Latin America and Caribbean neighbours, Guyana ranks first at 66 for political empowerment, but in its overall gender gap index in 2015, Guyana follows Trinidad and Tobago.

Table 1
Political empowerment rank for Guyana and selected LAC countries

Country	*2011 (1–135)*	*2012 (1–135)*	*2013 (1–136)*	*2014 (1–142)*	*2015 (1–145)*	*2015 — Overall rank*
Brazil	114	72	68	74	89	85
Guyana	28	32	33	34	37	66
Suriname	95	107	110	131	90	94
Trinidad and Tobago	31	36	38	58	56	46
Venezuela	56	35	37	95	82	78

Source: MOSP, TIP Unit 2016.

The General Framework for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

12. The Government of Guyana demonstrates its commitment to a robust human rights framework through ratification of key international conventions and treaties. In addition to United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the State party has enshrined in its Constitution the following:

- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);

[7] (Ministry of Finance 2011).

- International Convention against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or degrading treatment or Punishment (CAT);
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of "Belem do Para").

13. Further, the State party also signed and ratified the following:

- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

14. In September 2011, the Government of Guyana signed the Universal Declaration for the Birth Registration of Children and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (July 2013), the ILO C189-Domestic Workers Convention (August 2013) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Convention (June 2014). Additionally, Guyana has continuously strengthened its national legal framework to advance the rights of woman and children through laws and mechanisms. National legislation which is consistent with the object and purpose of the CEDAW includes inter alia the Domestic Violence Act, No. 18 of 1996, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1995, the Prevention of Discrimination Act, No. 26 of 1997, the Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act No. 19 of 1997, the Representation of People's Act (Section 11B, Articles 5–7), the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act 2005, the Marriage Amendment Act 2006, the Protection of Children Act 2009, the Sexual Offences Act 2010, the Persons with Disabilities Act 2010, the Childcare and Development Services Act 2011, the Custody, Contact, Guardianship and Maintenance Act 2011 and the Common Law Union (Amendment) Act of 2012. These laws provide a near comprehensive legal framework for the full implementation of human rights instruments signed and ratified by the State party.

15. Institutional mechanisms to protect and promote human rights nationally, receive complaints and undertake advocacy have been established by Article 212 of the Constitution — The Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC), the Indigenous Peoples Commission (IPC), the Rights of the Child Commission (RCC) and the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC). These four commissions have been functioning and tabling reports to Parliament. The State Party is yet to constitute the Human Rights Commission (HRC), which is intended as an overarching human rights entity and provides a secretariat for all four Commissions, directed by Article 212 J (2)(e) to "uphold human rights and investigate abuses, resolve disputes or rectify acts or omissions by mediation, conciliation, or negotiation."

16. Other important institutions for human rights oversight and investigations are the Police Complaints Authority and Office of Professional Responsibility vis-à-vis the Guyana Police Force (GPF) and the Office of the Ombudsman. The State Party is pleased to report that an Ombudsman was appointed in January 2014, after the position had been vacant for nearly eight years.

Part II: Responses to the Concluding Observations of the 7th and 8th Periodic Report

17. The Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana (hereinafter GOCRG) welcomed the comments and recommendations by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The recommendations formed the basis for several initiatives promoting the advancement of the status of women during the period under review 2011–2015. The following sections review the committee's concluding observations, respond to concerns and identify specific actions taken to address and promote the recommendations.

Principal Areas of Concerns and Recommendations

Article 2. Definition of Discrimination and Incorporation of CEDAW

Parliament

18. The GOG wishes to highlight that the Convention is implemented through constitutional provisions, legislative and administrative measures enacted by the State party. The laws of Guyana are harmonized with the CEDAW and the obligations of the State party are respected and upheld by the executive, legislature, judiciary and agencies of government and where applicable by all natural and legal persons.

19. The State Party tabled Concluding Observations (CO) of the CEDAW Committee on the seventh and eighth periodic reports in Parliament as recent as January 2016. Specifically, the Ministry of Social Protection disseminated copies to all Ministries, human rights commissions and key stakeholders to allow policymakers to utilise the CO as a guide in the development of programmes advancing the rights of women and girls.

Visibility of the Convention

20. The State Party notes the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 9 on the visibility of the Convention and wishes to inform that publicity about the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana Report to the Committee in 2012 was highlighted in the local media. During 2013, the Women and Gender Equality Commission disseminated the Committee's concluding observations to all of its stakeholders. The Women and Gender Equality Commission also held post-CEDAW review meetings with the Attorney-General, magistrates and attorneys to share CEDAW Concluding Observations. Some of the issues advocated were improvements in the jury system, adequacy of protection orders, and the imperative of reducing the backlog of cases for sexual offences. Meetings were held with several women's organisations to further explain and distribute the comments.

21. In efforts to advance awareness of CEDAW, the State Party through its Ministry of Social Protection disseminated the Convention and Concluding Observations to relevant Ministries, government agencies and constitutional commissions. The GCRG continued to work closely with civil society organisations including Help & Shelter, Red Thread Women's Inc., Guyana Association of Women Lawyers and Women Across Differences to promote gender equality through consultations; related training workshops; and program collaboration. Various stakeholders — listed in Annex A — also participated in the preparation of this report during 2015.

22. The Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (GAWL) and the Guyana Bar Association revised and disseminated a 'Citizen-Friendly Legal Rights and Remedies Booklet' "Law and You IV" 2011 free of cost, available both in print and electronic versions and disseminated widely. A handbook on the Sexual Offences Act was produced by two local NGOs — Help & Shelter and Rainbow House with funding

from Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. UNFPA funded the development of the Plan of Action for the roll out of the 2010 Sexual Offenses Act.

Legal status of the Convention

23. In paragraph 11 of its Concluding Observations the Committee urged the State Party to place high priority on the process of fully incorporating the Convention. It is noteworthy that Guyana subscribes to the dualist doctrine of international law whereby international conventions must be incorporated into domestic legislation to be enforceable. With regard to CEDAW, no single legislation incorporates this Convention. The State Party has, through the Constitution (Amendment) Act No. 5 of 2001, incorporated CEDAW into its domestic law by way of the Fourth Schedule in the Constitution of Guyana. By this, the constitution, being the supreme law, enshrines Guyana's commitment to adhere to the articles therein. Hence CEDAW in its entirety must be implemented. The State Party notes that there are recent amendments to laws that remove discrimination against women including the Rights of Persons in Common Law Union (Amendment) Act 2012 and the Married Persons Property (Amendment) Act 2014.

- The Rights of Persons in Common Law Union (Amendment) Act 2012 provides for a single woman living with a single man in a common-law union for not less than five years or vice versa to have the same power and rights regarding intestate succession under the law as a widow or widower or a surviving spouse. However, only one such union shall be considered for any benefit;
- The Married Persons (Property) (Amendment) Act of 2014 provides for the division of property of married persons and the recognition of common law unions and the division of property among these unions. It stipulates that applications for division of property under Sections 6 (A) and 15 must be brought within three years after the dissolution or annulment of a marriage or union. The previous position was that applications having their genesis in a marriage had to be filed before a decree absolute was made whereas in relation to common law unions there was no limitation on the time.

24. The other branches of government (executive and judiciary) must interpret legislation according to international law and use the Convention as an aid in application. By implication jurists can apply relevant articles in cases brought before the Courts. The rights and obligations under CEDAW are incorporated and implemented through various legislation and policies by relevant Ministries and Agencies.

Article 2: Elimination of Discrimination against Women

25. In paragraph 13 of its Concluding Observations, the Committee urged the State Party to include the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination against women and harmonise provisions at the constitutional and legislative levels dealing with equality and non-discrimination. The State Party condemns discrimination and affirms the principle of equality of women and men as prescribed in Article 2 of CEDAW.

26. Article 149 (2) of the constitution of Guyana defines discrimination to mean affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their or their parents respective description by race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, age, disability, marital status, sex, gender, language, birth, social class, pregnancy, religion, conscience, belief, or culture, whereby persons of such one description are subjected to restrictions to which other persons are not made subject to, or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not afforded to other persons of the same or another description.

27. The State party is committed to harmonising various constitutional and legislative provisions dealing with equality and non-discrimination. The GCROG recognizes its responsibility to ensure that legal gaps are removed to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Ministry of Social Protection, has begun an active dialogue with stakeholders to ensure that legal gaps are removed to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

28. Currently, there are ongoing policy discussions to ensure that women and girls experience full and effective implementation of laws that protect them from violence and all forms of discrimination. Guyana's National Policy on Domestic Violence 2008–2013 was formulated as a result of a National Dialogue among state and non-state actors. The National Policy 2008–2013 was formulated based on several thematic areas covering prevention, services for victims/survivors, enforcement of legal remedies and public education across social and health sectors. In order to effectively implement the national policy, a National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee was created and comprised individuals (women and men) from government ministries, state institutions, civil society and experts from other fields. This implementation process has been predicated upon the decentralization of responsibilities through RWACs, tasked with initiating, implementing and monitoring region-specific plans and activities. Even though the policy has since lapsed, it has provided the basis for formulation of the draft National Plan of Action for Implementation of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Acts (2014–2017). An Inter-Agency Task Force further developed the National Regulatory Framework on Violence Against Women and other Gender-Based Violence to accelerate the policy and National Action Plan to transform prevailing gender ideologies and foster an enabling environment for women to enjoy all rights delineated in the Convention.

Access to justice and legal complaints mechanisms

29. The State party noted the concerns of the Committee about access to justice in paragraph 15 of the CO and would like to provide further details in this regard:

(a) Courts are operational in all ten regions of the country; In the urban and rural settings Courts are permanent and sit daily, while in the hinterland there are seven functioning Magistrates Court — Region # 1 North West: Matthews Ridge, Mabaruma, Aqueiro; Region # 7: Bartica and Kamarang; Region # 8: Madhia and Region # 9: Lethem — that sit quarterly;

(b) Steps have been taken to familiarise the judiciary with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). For instance, Guyana's former Chancellor of the Judiciary and former member and Chair of the CEDAW Committee, Madame Justice Désirée Bernard, in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), hosted a seminar for judges and magistrates on gender and domestic violence in 2012. The seminar focused on gender-based and domestic violence and sought to promote better understanding among the judiciary of how the contents and procedures of the law reinforce equality/inequality between women and men;

(c) Regarding women's access to justice, legal aid clinics have been established by the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic (GLAC), an NGO, in four of the country's ten regions — Regions 2, 4, 5, 6 and 10. In 2011, UNICEF collaborated with the GLAC to promote the human rights and expand children's legal aid services. The Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General Chambers provides paralegals in the hinterland to supplement legal aid services. The Government recognises the need to expand legal aid services to all regions of the country and proposals are being considered for services to be established in Region 8, Madhia and Region 9, Lethem.

Overall, women outnumber men in accessing legal aid services annually across all four regions. During the period under review, GLAC interviewed 8,887 (67 percent) women out of 13,198 clients. The total number represents the proportion of clients that benefited from services or were ineligible for legal aid services. Only 2 percent of persons interviewed in all regions were considered ineligible for legal aid. Specifically, more women in Region 2 (12 percent) and 4 (78 percent) accessed services followed by Region 6 (8 percent) and Region 5 (2 percent);

(d) As mentioned above in paragraph 31, the Ombudsman was duly appointed with requisite resources to function effectively.

Article 3: Development and Advancement of Women

30. The GoCRG considers the equal participation of both women and men in all aspects of life and development which is imperative to achieve a just, equitable and prosperous society. In response, to recommendation 17, the GoCRG notes its unreserved support of the national machinery to implement policies and programmes in favour of gender equality through two bodies (1) the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) which is the Constitutional Commission and the newly established Gender Affairs Bureau (GAB) which replaced the Women's Affairs Bureau (WAB) and the Men's Affairs Bureau (MAB). The Regional Women's Affairs Committees which is part of the structure of the Gender Affairs Bureau was renamed Regional Gender Affairs Committees. The Gender Affairs Bureau is responsible for implementation of programmes to advance the equal rights of women and men. The Regional Gender Affairs Committee (RGAC) exists in each of the 10 Regions. The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) under the direction of the Director of Social Services, Ministry of Social Protection also implements, programmes for the advancement of women. In strengthening the national machinery, the new government has facilitated initiatives to formulate a National Gender Policy which will promote gender mainstreaming in public policies, programmes and plans, as well as to create more opportunities for redress regarding offences committed against women and girls in public and private spaces.

Financial Resources

31. The financing of the national machinery was approximately 1 percent of the national budget. Public budget for WAB in 2011 was GYD 6,843,660 and steadily increased over the period to GYD 11,545,640 in 2015 to cover its programs and grants to NGOs and the RWACs. Training conducted under the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute with public funding was as follows: 2011 — GYD 4,019,000; 2012 — GYD 2,815,000; 2013 — GYD 2,925,000; 2014 — GYD 3,398,000; and 2015 — GYD 728,000. Public grants to NGOs from government has been key contributor to addressing rights of women and girls at local levels. The operation of legal aid clinics benefit from annual subventions of USD 147,524.00 from the State Party. The WGEC Commission has been mainly financed by subventions in the range of GYD 20M from 2011 to GYD 25M in 2015.

Women and Gender Equality Commission

32. The WGEC has been committed to capacity development, raising awareness and advocacy on women's rights. It developed a five-year strategic plan 2013–2018, that provides guidance for the execution of its mandate. This Commission is required to submit a report annually to the Speaker of the National Assembly and any special report it so requires. During the period. 2013–2014, there were engagements with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Attorney General to ensuring that laws are enforced in relation to prevention of discrimination against women. *Activities of the WGEC 2011–2015 included*:

(a) Convening a key stakeholder dialogue with the Honourable Madam Justice Claire L' Heureux-Dubé, a former judge of the Supreme Court of Canada who has had a distinguished career in family law and human rights issues. The WGEC benefitted from a detailed dialogue on the implementation of CEDAW. It also hosted a conference on Gender Equality, Leadership and Political Participation with several NGOs where participants were educated on CEDAW;

(b) Facilitating a series of parliamentary seminars on Gender and Development, Sustainable Development Goal 5 with Dr. Linda Peake of York University as lead facilitator. This has resulted in key inputs in urban planning by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure which is in its commencement stage;

(c) Conducting workshops for thirty gender advocates from NGO/CSO and other national gender affairs bodies;

(d) Routine travel to the 10 Administrative Regions to educate citizens on access to justice. Some members of the WGEC are responsible for programmes implemented at the regional levels through Regional Women's Affairs Committees;

(e) Providing basic training for women candidates standing for Local Government Election at the municipal level and to train Toshaos or village captains serving in hinterland communities;

(f) Forging a partnership with the University of York in the establishment of a Centre for Gender Studies (CGS) at the University of Guyana (UG) based on recommendations of the WGEC Strategic Plan. The Commission also to contributed to curriculum development for the tertiary level gender program at the UG-CGS;

(g) Collaboration with key stakeholders in annual observances of International Women's Day and International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. These fora have been advocacy opportunities for promotion of women's rights that benefit from wide coverage by the local media.

33. With respect to WGEC's ability to provide its constitutionally mandated oversight of the implementation of CEDAW, the Human Rights Secretariat was established in 2013. While there is admittedly still no Human Rights Commission (HRC) set up, the secretariat provides primarily administrative and financial support as the principal liaison between the WGEC and the Ministry of Finance, which controls disbursement of finances. Government provides an annual subvention to all the rights commissions (including WGEC) to be utilized in administrative costs and programmes. At the time of writing this report deliberations on renewing the term of WGEC are ongoing within the Parliament.

Women's Affairs Bureau and Men's Affairs Bureau

34. During the period under consideration the WAB and MAB conducted several training seminars, workshops and awareness sessions to introduce persons within Government and the non-government sectors to gender concepts, gender mainstreaming, gender analysis aimed at empowering women and improving gender equality in all sectors of the society. These interventions were carried out in schools, teacher training colleges, prisons, NGOs, FBOs, sports clubs and with members of the security forces throughout the country. Specifically, the WAB undertook the following activities:

(a) Training and capacity building for staff members of the Women's Affairs Bureau has been operationalised through a series of workshops and collaborations with UN agencies namely UNFPA and UN Women. The WAB along with staff members of the MoSP benefitted from training and seminars on *Gender Equality, Self and Self Assertiveness for Women, Women and Sexual and Reproductive Health,*

Gender-Based Violence, Planning through a Gender Lens, Barriers for Women and Men in the Work Environment and Exploring the linkages between Gender-Based Violence and HIV/AIDS;

(b) Subsequently, training sessions were held by WAB and MAB with the Guyana Business Coalition through the Guyana National Shipping Corporation and seven other rural-based NGOs. Gender awareness programmes held in workplaces and prisons covered *gender-based violence, sexual harassment and anger management* respectively. Along with support from UN Women, several initiatives were executed during the sixteen (16) days of activism across the country, including video shows, sharing of experiences by survivors and edutainment, dramatization to depict all forms of violence, discussions about the leading causes of domestic violence and rape;

(c) In November 2013, approximately thirty-five (35) persons benefitted from a two-day workshop on *CEDAW and the Gender Dimension of HIV in the Caribbean*. The participants comprised representatives from government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, representatives of the network of Guyanese living with and affected by HIV. This workshop was sponsored by United Nations (UN) Women, who also participated in the workshop and made presentations along with the Head of the National AIDS Programme Secretariat;

(d) Another important workshop undertaken by the WAB was the Preparation and Reporting of CEDAW Report and the Importance of the Interim Report. As part of the collaborative effort with partners the Bureau also extended the latter training to members of the Inter-Ministry Committees of line Ministries, hinterland communities, specifically Regions 7, 8 & 9, NGOs, and representatives of constitutional human rights commissions. Additionally, representatives of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Chambers and GAWL were engaged in this dialogue;

(e) The WAB, aware that gender empowerment programs should move beyond the urban centres, amplified its outreach in collaboration with the RWACs to other Regions in 2014. One hundred and forty-four (144) women benefitted from empowerment and gender awareness sessions. Women participants were drawn from Region 2 (13 women), Region 3 (44 women) and Region 6 (87 women). The latter intervention resulted in the acquisition of farming tools for a group business venture that has since created employment for young girls and mothers within Belfield and Notenzuel communities;

(f) In 2014, thirty-five (35) members of the RWAC attended the Annual General Meeting under the theme 'Enhancing the Development of our Women and Embracing Gender Equality. Their participation in the dialogue, on the role of women and climate change, women in health, gender-based violence and its effects on the family, women in entrepreneurship, an update on the CEDAW report and aspects of the labour laws and the Domestic Workers Convention No. 189, has been ongoing;

(g) Three (3) sessions were held with members of the Regional Women's Affairs Committees (RWCA) in Regions 3, 5 and 6, where there were reportedly high incidents of Violence. In this regard they benefitted from specialised training. Following these sessions, approximately sixty (60) persons including representatives of the communities have been equipped to network with other agencies. One main achievement of their newly acquired skills and networking has been the delivery of counselling services to beneficiaries in selected communities in Region 6;

(h) In an effort to reach working class women and men, the WAB expanded its collaboration with the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO), Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) and the Geology and Mines Commission to

conduct workshops on gender equality, gender-based violence, suicide prevention, conflict management and other related issues. The results of the collaboration from 2013 to 2015 has been: seventy (70) female sugar workers from Rose-Hall, Enmore, Wales, Uitvlugt, Skeldon and Albion estates benefitted from a one-day gender awareness workshop; twenty-five females and males (25) from Rose Hall sugar estate benefitted from a one-day session; and thirty-four (34) staffers, twenty-eight (28) males and seven (7) females drawn from various departments of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) participated in gender, gender-based violence and conflict management sensitisation workshops.

Men's Affairs Bureau

35. The Men Empowerment Network (MEN) a precursor to the Men's Affairs Bureau was formed in 2009 and embarked on programs designed to eradicate domestic violence and suicide. The Network comprised men's organizations and religious leaders who worked through faith-based institutions with adult and young men to improve their attitudes towards women and encourage responsible parenting. While the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana supported and collaborated with the MEN, it also recognised the need for an institutional mechanism to address men's issues at the national level. As a result the Men's Affairs Bureau was operationalised in 2010 within the Ministry of Human Services (renamed Ministry of Social Protection) to provide continuous gender awareness and sensitisation programmes for men and boys.

Guyana Women's Leadership Institute

36. The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute conducted workshops and awareness sessions including the history of the women's movement in Guyana, gender perspectives and gender-based violence and trafficking-in-persons. During the period under review the GWLI hosted several workshops for Regions 3,4,5, 6 &10:

- 2011 — Twenty-nine students (29) from Regions 3, 4, 5 & 6;
- 2012 — Thirty-four students (34) from Regions 3, 4, 5, 6 & 10;
- 2013 — Thirty students (30) from Regions 3, 4 & 5;
- 2014 — Thirty-one students (31) from Regions 4, 5 & 6.

37. The Cooperative Republic of Guyana also recognises the importance of empowerment of women through education and capacity building. From 2011 to 2015 approximately 450 women participated in training programs offered for computer literacy, food preparation, entrepreneurship, information technology, office procedures and literacy resulting in certification from the GWLI. Some women have continued onto higher education programs but increasingly women are becoming participants in micro enterprise and small business after participation in training programs.

National (Inter-agency) Task Force

38. In August 2014, the MOSP established a National (Inter-agency) Task Force on Sexual Violence to review draft protocols and a National Plan for the Implementation of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Acts. UNFPA also provided support for the hosting of meetings of the Task Force as well as for the development of the Sexual Offenses Action Plan. The protocols and national plan are aimed at training and education in prevention, reporting and elimination of sexual and domestic violence. The preparation of the NP engaged key stakeholders and women's groups that support the national approach to tackling the interpersonal violence epidemic in the country. The NP proposes to enhance mechanisms across the country to assist

victims and offer rehabilitation for perpetrators. The plan includes a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) component to be applied on three (3) occasions during the implementation, and final evaluation at the concluding stages.

39. A full and robust gender policy has been an endeavour of previous administrations and benefits from multiple initiatives involving key stakeholders directed towards this goal. The Ministry of Social Protection, as the lead agency of the women and gender machinery, reaffirms its commitment to tangible outcomes for women through renewed efforts to complete a National Gender Policy. The formulation process for the National Gender Policy began in August 2015 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017. Approximately 350 persons including Members of Parliament, Regional and Municipal Councils, civil society, youth representatives from youth-led organisations; social workers and practitioners, participated in a national conference to share their views and make recommendations for the development of the policy.

Evaluation of Training Programmes

40. Evaluation of the Training Programmes revealed that most participants were either survivors or victims of +domestic violence. The workshops and sensitization fora assisted some individuals to seek services that deal with gender-based violence issues or opportunities for economic empowerment.

Article 4: Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men

41. The CROG is committed to strengthening temporary special measures as encouraged by the Committee in paragraph 19, to advance women's participation in the economy.

42. The microcredit programme established in June 2010 has continued throughout the reporting period. This initiative is being done in collaboration with a commercial bank, the Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (GBTI). Through the facility, loans amounts ranging from USD 500 to USD 1,250 are offered at a low interest rate for start-up and expansion of business ventures to female single parents, aged 18–58 years. The repayment period is twelve to twenty-four months and no collateral is required. GBTI provided the funds for on-going lending while the Ministry paid its staff responsible for the oversight of the initiative.

43. Between January 2011 and May 2015, 3,422 loans were issued to 3,296 persons (including repeat borrowers) in the amount of USD 1.85 million[8]: 2011 — 1,181 loans with a value of USD 890,000; 2012 — 982 loans with a value of USD 411,500; 2013 — 700 loans with a value of USD 314,000; 2014 — 346 loans with a value of USD 147,000 and 2015 — 213 loans with a value of USD 89,000. Beneficiaries are mainly from eight of the ten administrative regions — Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9. Apart from the access to soft loans, women benefitted from training in such areas as basic entrepreneurial skills, networking, basic accounting, advertising and packaging.

44. By 2013, it was recognized that the default rate had begun to increase and efforts were directed at monitoring borrowers and encouraging repayments from defaulters. Thus, the number of loans issued was significantly reduced over the last three years of the period. Because of the high default rate (85 percent), the programme had become dormant at the beginning of 2015. An evaluation of the program found that better targeting and screening of beneficiaries, training and coaching (mentoring) are critical if the programme is to achieve high levels of success. With the change in Government in May 2015, the WOW programme was resuscitated in October 2015 and provided funding that is being used as a credit guarantee. The terms and

[8] The approximate exchange rate is GYD 200 to USD 1.

conditions for the borrowers remain the same. At the end of December 2015, two loans in the amount of USD 1,750.00 have been approved.

45. Temporary Special Measures have also been implemented to address discrimination against women as well as to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality of women and men with new or expanded programmes. In the areas of education, health and housing the social safety nets such as the *Single Parent Assistance Programme (SPAP), the Public Assistance Programme (PAP),* the *Special Circumstances Programme (SCP),* school uniform vouchers for all nursery and primary school children attending public educational institutions were expanded during the period under review. In the case of the SPAP and PAP, single mothers are assisted to participate in training programs designed for women entrepreneurs. Funding for this programme totalled GYD 25 million each year between 2011 and 2014. Other initiatives like the SCP and the school uniform and school feeding programmes directly benefit children. Consequently these temporary measures significantly assist women and vulnerable families.

46. Additionally, the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) 2003–2015 implemented by the Ministry of Education identified its main goal as universal quality completion of education. In each primary school within the community, the aim has been to enhance school attendance for every child in low-income families. Another temporary special measure to accelerate girls' education has been the main sub-initiative, the School Feeding Programme (SFP) under the Strengthened School Community Partnership component. The SPF established a community supported and managed hot meal-feeding program operated by women daily and supplied with local subsistence products.

47. In July 2015, the GOG introduced a new special temporary measure project, the 5 B's — Boats, Buses, Bicycle, Books and Breakfast — as a measure designed to accelerate school attendance and development of disadvantaged communities in rural and hinterland areas. These initiatives provide continued community employment especially for women as heads of households through coordination with local government and other private and public sector organizations.

Article 5: Elimination of Sex Roles and Stereotyping

Stereotypes and harmful practices

48. Regarding the Committee's concern about persistence of harmful norms, practices and traditions, patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes in paragraph 21 of the Concluding Observations, it should be noted that consistent efforts have been made to reverse and eliminate the persistence of gender stereotyping, negative cultural attitudes and other practices which discriminate against women. As mentioned above in paragraph 48 the Women's Affairs Bureau has been involved in ongoing public education in the print and electronic media as well as through various workshops, seminars and public fora to challenge the existence of discriminatory patriarchal attitudes and stereotyping. In partnership with NGOs and UN agencies several such sessions have been held on an ongoing basis in community, schools, business, religious and other spaces across the country to challenge gender roles, norms and promote gender equality. However there are some cultural practices which are challenging to address due to the value system in some communities. However efforts are being made to address the issue. The MOSP, State agencies, women's organisations and other NGOs have also participated in the dissemination of information through the media on where to access care and protection services for victims/survivors and where and how to report cases of domestic violence.

49. The National Regulatory Framework on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence reinforced the State Party's commitment to transform prevailing

gender ideologies and foster an environment that changes stereotypes and discriminatory cultural values and practices, as well as ensure that women and girls enjoy all rights under CEDAW. The National Gender Policy that aims to eradicate discrimination against women will address the physical safety, emotional and mental integrity of women. It is intended to be a comprehensive strategy including clear goals and timetables, to modify or eliminate negative cultural practices and stereotypes that discriminate against women, in conformity with Articles 2(f) and 5(a) of the Convention.

Article 6: Suppression of Trafficking and Exploitation of Women

Addressing the root causes of trafficking and prostitution

50. The CROG recognizes that both prostitution and trafficking in persons are primarily rooted in poverty, entrenched inequality and exacerbated by anti-social family life, abuse, sexism, and class prejudices. Efforts to eliminate trafficking and exploitation of victims of prostitution as recommended in paragraph 25 are ongoing. Programmes such as the Hinterland Scholarship Programme, the universal school uniform programme, economic assistance to single mothers and skills training for youths are all aimed at reducing poverty, creating equality of opportunities and access to the delivery of services to reduce the vulnerabilities of women, children, in general and specifically within Indigenous communities. These programmes complemented the counter-trafficking action plan (2014) developed by the National Task Force for Combating Trafficking in Persons (NTFCTP) that focused on prevention (awareness-raising, training civil society representatives to identify and report TIP); prosecution (enhanced surveillance and investigation); protection (support services for survivors) and partnership.

Training and awareness

51. The Ministries of Social Protection and Indigenous Peoples Affairs have undertaken awareness and training programmes. These include the distribution of media kits, documentaries, guidelines for interviewing victims and a guide to the underlying principles in working with victims. Training programmes were also provided for police officers of the Criminal Investigation Department, Guyana Police Force on trafficking victim identification and case investigation. During the period under review, these Ministries collaborated with UNICEF, UNFPA, United States of America Department of Justice and Department of State, the Canadian High Commission, UNDP and the IOM to undertake extensive training and awareness sessions with stakeholders from all ten administrative regions of the country.

52. The Counter Trafficking in Persons Unit (TIPS) of the MOSP has undertaken public awareness campaigns, awareness and sensitization sessions and community workshops and training of focal point persons in Regions 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Specifically, trainings and awareness raising included:

- 2011 — Ten (10) awareness and sensitization sessions on trafficking in persons targeting secondary schools and riverine communities contacting approximately one thousand two hundred and forty-five (1,245) persons;
- 2012 — A capacity-building workshop was conducted with approximately forty-two (42) key stakeholders from the ten administrative regions;
- 2013 — Thirty-eight (38) persons were trained to be "Trainer of Trainers" on TIP;
- 2014 — Awareness and sensitization sessions were conducted in fifty-nine (59) secondary schools across 7 (seven) Regions. Approximately eight thousand (8,000) students and one hundred and fifty (150) teachers were sensitized about

TIP. Seventeen (17) awareness and sensitization sessions were conducted in villages and communities;

- 2015 — A total of forty (40) persons from the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and indigenous communities attended facilitated workshops. Further, collaboration with the MOIPA resulted in a total of seven (7) awareness and sensitization workshops conducted with approximately two hundred and forty-nine (249) stakeholders from Indigenous communities.

Monitoring and periodic evaluation

53. The NTFCTP monitors and reports on the nature and magnitude of trafficking in persons in Guyana. It conducts public education and undertake prevention measures. The Committee is asked to refer to **paragraph 63 and 65** of this report for progress made to disseminate and receive information on combating TIP. It is through these interactions that information is exchanged, thus helping the Ministry to formulate targeted strategies in prevention and protection from trafficking in persons. While outreach initiatives have been conducted in all ten administrative regions of the country, greater emphasis was placed in Regions where suspected cases of trafficking in persons were reported to the MOSP.

Data on Trafficking in Persons (TIPS)

54. Government efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers have been steady and improving during the period under review. From 2011 to 2015, as shown in Table 2 below TIPS received fifty-four (54) reports of human trafficking. Of the twenty-five (25) persons accused, a total of twenty-three persons (23) were prosecuted. Over the period, seven (7) persons were found guilty, nine (9) cases were dismissed and seven (7) are pending. Accused traffickers were both men and women. When a trafficker is found guilty, the Court may or may not order that convicted trafficker to pay restitution to the survivor or both forms of punishment may be imposed.

Table 2
TIPS from 2011 to 2015

Year	*Victims*	*Accused*	*Male*	*Female*	*Charged*	*Found guilty*	*Dismissed*	*Pending*
2011	11	2	1	1	1	0	1	0
2012	11	6	4	2	6	3	2	1
2013	12	6	2	4	6	1	5	0
2014	3	2	1	1	2	1	0	1
2015	17	9	4	5	8	2	1	5
Total	**54**	**25**	**12**	**13**	**23**	**7**	**9**	**7**

Source: MOSP, TIP Unit 2016.

International, regional and bilateral cooperation

55. The MOSP benefitted from cooperation with International Organization for Migration (Jamaica), UNDP, UNICEF, the Canadian High Commission and the United States of America, Departments of Justice and State. Furthermore, the Guyana Police Force has collaborated with Governments of Suriname and Jamaica on four international sex and labor trafficking cases.

Support for Victims

56. The Counter Trafficking in Persons Unit (TIPS) and regional focal points are accessible to the public, thus allowing victims to call or drop-in with information and receive assistance. TIPs' officials have provided court support to alleged victims and witnesses and covered transportation costs. The MOSP has partnered with other non-governmental organizations in providing psychosocial support and counselling to alleged victims to assist with reintegration of families and communities. Shelters for survivors of domestic violence and TIPs managed by four local non-governmental organizations continue to benefit from government subvention and support.

Addressing Violence against Women

57. The CROG continued its multi-sectoral approach to addressing the difficult issues of violence against women and girls. In 2013, the Sexual Offences Act 2010 Chapter 8:03 was subjected to proposed amendments and judicial review to address gaps that surfaced during its implementation in the courts. Ongoing review will ensure that the SOA is consistent with fundamental rights provision in Articles 144 (2) (d) and (e) of Guyana's Constitution and protect the rights of sexual violence survivors. In the same year the collective commitment of Parliament was demonstrated by the unanimous passage of *Resolution No. 47 on Interpersonal Violence* that condemned all forms of interpersonal violence and supported new and existing programmes to address the scourge by government and CSOs.

58. A key feature of the comprehensive measures to prevent and address violence against woman and girls has been the establishment of the National Task Force for the Prevention of Sexual Violence (NTFPSV) in 2010. In general, the task force was expected to develop a national plan of action for the prevention of sexual offences but its purpose was undermined by limited meetings. However, it managed to deliberate and develop a *Protocol for Prevention of Sexual Violence* which eventually received intersectoral endorsement in December 2016. The protocol is aimed at educating persons on the prevention, reporting and elimination of sexual and domestic violence and to be equipped and speak out in this regard.

59. Another measure for addressing violence has been boosting the capacity of the Guyana Police Force to adequately prosecute perpetrators. Government has invested in improving physical infrastructure in a number of police stations, some eighteen police stations were remodeled to fit special rooms for victims of gender-based violence to make their reports in a comfortable, confidential and user-friendly environment. However, women and girls still report that they encounter problems when professionalism of frontline workers.

60. Government recognised the need to provide comprehensive services is committed to providing special units in hospital/health centres or, where no hospitals or health centres are available, other appropriate venues, where services are centralized and victim-centered, with nurses trained in the gathering of forensic evidence and treatment of rape and sexual violence survivors, trained counsellors to address the psychological and physical trauma, and trained police officers to take statements in a humane and professional manner. Both the MOSP and NGOs have been provided counselling and court advocates to attend to needs of women survivors and their families throughout the court process.

61. Even with progressive legislation one of the main challenges remains application of the SOA at the level of the police although more than 125 police officers have been exposed the provisions of the legislation between 2011 and 2012. Regular police training now includes a five-module component on domestic violence and child abuse aimed at awareness of domestic violence as a crime, its effects on

women and children, legislation, role of the police in assessing reports, survivor-friendly interviewing, proper documentation and record keeping. Notwithstanding ongoing training done at the GPF training school, the State Party recognises the need to accelerate refresher trainings and facilitate participatory dialogue on the use of the SOA among law enforcement agencies including the judiciary.

62. Successful prosecution of perpetrators has been less than desirable due to challenges with proper investigations of sexual offences cases and the Courts' access to forensic and DNA evidence. Since the SOA was passed in 2010, members of the judiciary were exposed to training on two occasions, in one instance this training occurred in the United Kingdom. In collaboration with UNICEF a number of training workshops on the provisions of the SOA were conducted and protocols developed for police officers, public prosecutors, court staff and social workers in 2011 and 2012.

63. In regard to public education on the criminal nature of domestic violence, various awareness campaigns and sensitisation sessions to de-stigmatize victims, encourage women to report incidents of domestic and sexual violence have been elaborated in paragraphs 46. 48, 49 and 50 of this report. It is also noteworthy that in 2012, the GOG facilitated a national conversation on domestic violence under the theme, *"It's Our Problem, Let's Solve"* aimed at generating broad based citizen consultation on the national response to this challenge. These conversations built of the momentum of the previous *Stamp It Out* campaign had been broadly-cast and resulted in SOA.

64. GOG continued to provide financial support to four shelters managed by NGOs that provide short-term accommodation, counselling, court advocacy and training for women and girls. From 2011 to 2015 a total of 235 women and 318 children accessed one of these shelters, there was an approximate 15% decline each year for woman staying at the shelter. During 2015, eight women living at the shelter benefited from training courses that could improve their employment opportunities namely, care for the elderly, cosmetology and catering. Additionally, to address the challenge of limited shelters, the State in collaboration with community based organisations launched the "White Zones" project that increased the number of safe spaces for women and children fleeing abusive homes. *White Zone* facilities offered 24-hour temporary lodging and daily services that included meals, counselling, child friendly environments and other forms of assistance.

65. In 2011, the MOSP in collaboration with UNFPA conducted a participatory study titled 'A Survey Research on the Incidence and Drivers of Gender-based Violence in Guyana' that culled data from women across four geographical Regions of the country. The main finding was that across class, ethnic, religious belief and socio-economic status, 3 in every 5 women experience physical violence by an intimate partner; 1 in every 2 women were sexually abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives and about 3 in every 4 women has been emotionally abused by their spouse or partner.

66. The GOG also benefits from ongoing data collection by the Guyana Police Force (as shown in Annex B) to enhance programming for elimination of gender-based violence. During the period 2011–2015, statistics from the GPF reveal that 157 women and girls were murdered, with the highest incidents occurring in Region 4 followed by Region 3. The majority of women victims of murder by an intimate partner were Indo-Guyanese and women within the age range 20–29 and 40–44. In terms of prosecution of perpetrators, 97 men were charged and 10 committed suicide. Of those charged only two convictions resulted and 30 cases are ongoing. The 1,351 reported cases of rape that occurred during the reporting period (shown in Annex B, Table 6) is a grave concern to the State Party. Beyond the normal effort and additional time being given to addressing the issues of violence against women and girls, the

new government has increased resources in terms of personnel and departments within the MOSP to accelerated programmes that deal with the violence against women and girls.

67. (f) To provide effective protection against violence and discrimination against all groups of women through the enactment of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that includes the prohibition of all forms of discrimination against them and the decriminalization of consensual adult same sex relations as indicated in the oral statement of the delegation.

68. The Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana continued its multi sectoral approach to addressing the difficult issues of violence against women and girls. In 2013 the Sexual Offenses Act (SOA) (2010) Chapter 8:03 was subject to proposed amendments and judicial review to address gaps that surfaced during its implementation in the court. However ongoing review will ensure that the SOA is consistent with provisions for fundamental rights in Article 144(2) (d) and (F) of Guyana's Constitution. This seeks to protect the rights of survivors of sexual violence.

Article 7: Equal Rights in Political and Public Life

69. In order to ensure equal rights of women, the revised Local Government Act enables political parties to submit a list of candidates which must comprise at least twenty-five women who will be eligible for selection.

Article 8: International Representation and Participation

Participation in political and public life

70. The GOG reports that regarding paragraph 27 of the Concluding Observations, related to Articles 7 and 8, discussions are ongoing in keeping with the constitutional reform, Article 149. No new legislative reforms have been implemented to increase the participation of women in political and public life. However the government recognises its constitutional commitment to the principle of equality between the sexes and has acted in support of women's equal participation in the public service, the judiciary, local government, political parties, the national machinery and international representation. (in keeping with the Guyana Constitution).

Women in the Public Service

71. Women have also been appointed to key decision-making portfolios which include Director of Public Prosecutions, Director of Budget, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Registrar of the Supreme Court, Registrar of the Land Registry, Registrar of the Deeds Registry, and Registrar General of the General Registrar's Office. On the Constitutional Commissions, the WGEC and RCC these eighteen-member bodies comprise 17 women and 13 women respectively. During the period, five of the fourteen Permanent Secretaries were women who were appointed to the Ministries of Public Security, Education, Social Protection, Foreign Affairs, and Legal Affairs. It is common to find a preponderance of women in the public service and the GOG has been keen to ensure that women are also represented at middle to top levels of the bureaucracy. The Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly, and the Principal Assistant Secretary are all women. In 2015, Government further accelerated the promotion of women's full and equal participation in decision-making through appointments to Boards and State Bodies. As shown in Annex C, Table 7, women have been appointed to 92 percent of the twenty-six (26) Boards and State Bodies in Guyana. Seven of these Boards comprise 50 percent to 64 percent women; two Boards include 45 to 46 percent women; three Boards comprise 30 to 37 percent of women and 6 Boards have a range of 25 to 28 percent of women.

Women in the Judiciary

72. Women hold positions as Judges, Commissioners of Title and Magistrates. The Chief Justice (Acting), Commissioners of Title, Chief Magistrate and Principal Magistrate are women. Several High Court judges and Magistrates are women. For example from 2011 women judges were 30 percent of the establishment of 12 Judges and by 2015 the proportion of women Judges increased to 35 percent. At the same time, women Magistrates were 62 percent in 2011, declined to approximately 50 percent during 2012 to 2013, then steadily increased in 2014 and 2015 to 61 percent and 72 percent respectively.

Women in Local Government

73. Guyana's Election Act makes provision for a quota of one-third women on the lists of candidates for national and local elections. During the period 2011 to 2015 women representatives were more than 30 percent on a majority of Regional Democratic Councils. Overall, women's representation in this first tier of local government was 34 percent in 2011, remained consistently over one-third for successive years and declined to 29 percent in 2015 as shown in Annex C, Table 8. When the APNU+AFC held local government elections (LGE) after a 22-year hiatus, three new municipalities were added to Local Authority Areas and the representation of women also improved. Prior to March 2016, only 30 percent of women held positions in Municipalities, after LGE 50 percent of all representative are women, as shown in Annex C, Table 9. At the level of Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, the representation of women improved slightly from 41 percent prior to LGE elections to 42 percent of all elected officials as shown in Annex C, Table 10.

Women in Politics

74. Women sit as elected members on the executive of all major political parties. During the period 2011–2015, women occupied 33 percent of the seats in the National Assembly and maintain the same proportion of seats in the current Parliament as shown in Annex C, Table 11. The Chief Whips for the Government and Opposition in the 10th Parliament were women and the Deputy Speaker in the 8th, 9th and 10th Parliaments were women members of the major opposition party. At the level of the Cabinet, women comprised 33 percent of all members from 2011 to 2015. The current Executive appointed ten women as Ministers; three women hold positions as Cabinet members, while the remaining seven women are junior ministers within Ministries. Chief whips on both sides of the National Assembly are women. Indigenous women also hold positions as Ministers and are active in public life. These details are provided for the Committee under Article 14, paragraph 123.

75. The Committee is asked to refer to paragraphs 46, 48–50 and 76 of this report for details on awareness-raising campaigns targeting both women and men aimed at eliminating patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes. Women NGOs are active advocates for women's rights, encouraging women to take on the challenge of public leadership and civic responsibilities, advocating for change and making representation when women's rights are violated. One example of women's rights advocacy was their role in influencing the decision to dismiss the Minister of Health from office after he verbally assaulted and issued a threat of sexual violence to a female activist. The matter has since reached the Court and remains to be adjudicated.

International Representation and Participation

76. The GoG is committed to enhancing women's participation at the international level. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs women outnumber men by a significant margin; they represent 65.8 percent of all staff. At the end of 2016, the Director

General and five of eight Directors were women, 2 of 10 ambassadors representing Guyana abroad were women, and 5 of 6 Consul Generals were women. During 2011 to 2015, three of the nine Heads of Missions were women in Cuba, South Africa and Brazil.

Article 10: Equality in Education

77. The Constitution of Guyana guarantees the right of free education from nursery school through secondary school, including non-formal schooling. In practice, Government provides tuition free education, which includes the provision of essential textbooks, from primary to secondary levels for public schools. The Committee is referred to Article 14, paragraphs 116–118 for more details regarding public policies and programs on primary education have focused on improving access for students in hinterland regions as well as improving the inclusiveness of education for students with learning disabilities.

78. Guyana has achieved gender parity in primary education at the national level with near universal access to primary education as shown in Annex D of this report. From 2011–2015, student enrolment of females and males is almost the same at nursery through primary schools, however more females (51 percent) than males (49 percent) of secondary school age are enrolled in secondary schools at the national level. Overall enrolment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) from 2011–2014 for females was 38 percent compared to 62 percent males. The school life expectancy for primary to tertiary education is 13 years for males and 14 years for females. School-age boys have a higher school dropout rate than their female counterparts and are involved in anti-social behaviours at higher rates than girls.

79. The Ministries of Social Protection and Education (MOE) through the Board of Industrial Training (BIT) and the Kuru-Kuru Training Centre (KKTC) respectively promote both residential and non-residential technical and vocational training for young persons across all ten regions. These programs and second-chance opportunities are complementary measures to boost formal education, specialized skills training and promote entrepreneurship/income-generating opportunities for youth with non-academic talent. During 2011–2015, government sponsored programs were complemented by the USAID funded Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE) project designed to expand employment, education and skill-building opportunities for at risk youths.

80. The National Training Project for Youth Empowerment (NTPYE) executed by the BIT provides insight about girls' enrolment into non-traditional areas of academia. This programme makes no gender distinction in the selection of individuals for training programmes. Females have traditionally benefitted from training and often outnumber male counterparts, e.g. the percentage of females for the years 2011 to 2015 ranged as follows: 65 percent in 2011, 68 percent in 2012, 58 percent in 2013, 55 percent in 2014 and 54 percent in 2015. The marked decline in the latter years stemmed from a focus on the promotion of industrial training needs and less emphasis on traditional home economics programmes as in the earlier years. Although females as a percentage of the total population has declined, there has been significant progress made in the promotion of females in the traditionally male-dominated sectors — engineering, electrical and building construction. From 2011 to 2013, a small number of females were trained in these sectors (3 in 2011, 2 in 2012 and 9 in 2013 representing less than 1percent of the total persons trained). From 2014 to 2015, female participation has increased from 53 in 2014 to 53 in 2015 (representing 5 percent, and 4 percent of the total persons trained).

81. In 2013, Government also launched the Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme (YEAP) in all hinterland regions to engage youth in

community development while enriching their skill sets. YEAP targeted young people between 16–40 years and aimed to enhance economic and enterprise empowerment, leadership and community development. Over 2,000 young people have been engaged with this programme and benefited from skill-based trainings in basic computer hardware, photovoltaic systems (solar panels) repairs and business management.

82. A number of private and non-governmental sector efforts have also mobilized schools in the month of April on 'Girls in ICT Day' to recognize girls and to encourage a renewed interest in science and information technology career paths. Under the new government more tangible public-private partnerships have evolved and concerted efforts taken to encourage STEM among primary and high school students through robotics camps and other initiatives.

83. The State Party has not fully implemented the recommendation 29 d to "explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings ...", however the Ministry of Education completed broad consultations on the issue of prohibiting corporal punishment in schools while addressing amendments to the Education Bill 2008. The results of these consultations have been referred to a Parliamentary Special Select Committee (PSSC) and no consensus has been reached on the way forward, given the wide range of strongly held views within the society.

84. A total of one thousand, one hundred and seventy (1,170) public and private educational institutions are accessible throughout the country from nursery to tertiary levels. The University of Guyana with only two campuses — Turkeyen and Tain — offers certificate, diploma, degree and post-graduate programmes. A majority of students access soft loans offered by the GoG to cover tuition costs. University enrolment has been higher among women resulting in approximately 70 percent of women completing university degrees and graduating from UG during the period. Furthermore, at post-secondary level, there are also several state-run institutions — three Nursing schools; seven Technical/Vocational Institutes in six regions; Cyril Potter College of Education along with in-service teacher training programmes in each region; Burrowes' School of Arts; Carnegie School of Home Economics; Institute for Distance and Continuing Education; Adult Education Association; Felix Austin College of Police; Guyana School of Agriculture and GUYSUCO Apprenticeship Training Centre. The State Party also provides national and international scholarships for students based on needs assessment and scholastic potential. Data from the Public Service Ministry shown in Annex E, Table 16 reveals that women and men benefitted equally from scholarship awards that were either publicly-funded or sourced by international grants.

85. In some hinterland locations access to education for girls may be difficult due to the socio-economic status of the family and employment opportunities within the Regions. The State Party has shown commitment in ensuring equal access for all girls through a range of support services offered by the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FT) and the Hinterland Scholarship Program described under Article 4: Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men, paragraph 59 and Article 14: Promotion of Equal Access and Participation of Rural Women, paragraph 116–117 respectively.

Article 11: Elimination of Discrimination in Employment

86. Guyana's Equal Rights Act Chapter 38:01 provides for paid equal remuneration for the same work or work of the same nature for both women and men. The method of ensuring this principle obtains in practice occurs through the collective bargaining and negotiation processes. In July 2013, the previous government introduced the National Minimum Wage Order for regular working hours under Section 8 of the Labour Act, Chapter 98:01. The Parliament approved a national minimum wage and

a forty-hour work week for both private and public sector employees. The national minimum wage specifies that a minimum wage shall apply, but is not limited to workers employed in all the sectors, and shall be applicable to all workers in similar categories. Under the Labour Act, workplaces are inspected on a regular basis. This provision has also been widely discussed and published in the media across the country.

87. Currently, women in the formal and informal labour market contribute to and benefit from the National Insurance Scheme (NIS). According to the annual report of the NIS, the number of self-employed contributors is higher among men than women. This situation is related the gendered construction of labour, whereby more are women engaged in unpaid work. The GoG is currently consulting key stakeholders to formalise access to social security benefits for women in the informal sector. NIS has an ongoing televised public education program concerning the benefits available under the scheme.

88. The Committee is asked to refer to Article 10: Education, paragraphs 89–92 that details the State Party's concerted efforts to intensify technical and vocational training for women, including in traditionally male-dominated fields and in the agricultural sector. The State Party facilitates the development of alternative livelihoods: it aims to improve specialized skills training; to create opportunities for economic activities through self-employment; and support new small and medium business specially targeting support services for the emerging sectors.

89. In general, females comprise the greater proportion of the working age population (50.9 percent). However, it is estimated that women's share of the workforce is 34.6 percent while 65.4 percent not engaged in the formal economy. In fact, the national census noted that the majority of these woman (48.6 percent) engage in unpaid work — home duties, while others pursue educational advancement (8.0 percent) and the remainder (7.1 percent) accounts for women retirees.[9] Consistent with this view, the World Bank's Enterprise Survey (2010) also found that women are underrepresented in private sector firms' top management with a mere 17 percent as managers. However female participation in ownership of private firms is significantly higher with 58 percent.

90. During the period, Guyana economic development trajectory was altered from the traditional dependence on commodity exports like bauxite and sugar to other growth areas — extractive industries, especially gold mining, agriculture and services. Gold accounts for about 50 percent and the agriculture industry accounts for around 40 percent of export earnings. The delivery for services is the largest economic sector in the country, these range from whole and retail trade, transportation and storage; financial, information and communications technology; and business process outsourcing. During the period, Guyana begun to host call-centres and take advantage of the its educated workforce whose first language is English.

91. In 2012, the Guyana Women Miners Association was formed by women who own mining (gold) enterprises to represent their own interests while at the same time being members of the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners' Association. A report by the group stated that there were 700 women employed in this sector. This development illustrates the movement of women into non-traditional areas of economic activities and their greater participation in economic life. Women in the unionized agricultural production comprise 20 percent of the work force, the largest percentage work in the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO). Women have also been farming their own plots or family owned plots in agricultural production.[10] The Committee is asked to

[9] Bureau of Statistics 2012 Population and Housing Census, Compendium 3.

[10] (Government of the Republic of Guyana 2014).

also refer to paragraphs 121–122 for measures to enhance women's economic prospects in agriculture.

92. The State Party has taken several measures to integrate women at the grassroots level into productive employment and to maximize their contribution to sustainable development. These measures have been outlined in Article 4: Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men in this report.

Article 12: Equality in Access to Healthcare

93. In response to the Committee's concerns about access to high-quality health care, health related services and facilities in paragraph 33 of the CO, Guyana wishes to report that initiatives in keeping with Article 12 remain a national priority. There are several health care facilities which provide primary and secondary health care services for women and young girls. During the period, these facilities have also been fortified with the necessary supplies and staff to provide follow-up services, including emergency services for women and young girls. There has also been the introduction of a wider range of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (OB/GYN) services including high risk clinic, VIA screening and treatment, and other OB/GYN consultations. Through support from UNFPA, Maternity Waiting Homes were established to accommodate pregnant women and their families from interior locations during pre- and post-delivery. It is submitted that the curricula for health workers include comprehensive, mandatory, gender-sensitive courses on women's health and human rights, gender-based violence through formal diploma to post-graduate training at the University of Guyana Medical School and the Nursing Schools. Additionally, the Ministry of Health from time to time conducts seminars and specialized courses for health practitioners.

94. The GOG is pleased to note that there has been a sustained thrust to educate the public on family planning and contraception by MOPH and more specifically through the Regional Health Departments of all hinterland Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. Given the unacceptably high rate of teenage pregnancy, high risk pregnancy and maternity complications from Hinterland Regions, these interventions have commenced at the level of schools, village councils and community-based organisations. For women accessing precondition care and postnatal care, contraceptive services and education are accessible in the package of maternal and child health services. For instance, in 2014, a total of 24 doctors and nurses from all 10 administrative Regions benefitted from 'contraception use' training and returned to their regions with IUD kits. The Committee is again asked to refer to Article 16 Marriage and Family Relations, paragraphs 126–127 for additional details.

95. In accordance with the CEDAW and Beijing+20 commitments to remove regulatory and social barriers to reproductive health information and care for adolescents, the State Party has taken steps to ensure that health care providers do not restrict access of adolescents to reproductive health information and counselling. Through the Maternal Health Thematic Fund implemented by UNFPA support was provided for the prevention and reduction of maternal deaths and adolescent pregnancy. Contraceptive methods (which include, intra uterine device placements, Injections, pills, condoms among others) have been promoted to women and men in isolated communities, through the Maternal Child Health (MCH) programme and at all the public health facilities across the four hinterland Regions. Additionally, other methods have been accessible through the Surgical Outreach Program and permanent methods have been provided to women. These services have been strengthened by capacity building of 30 health care workers in contraceptive counselling. UNFPA has also provided capacity building support to the Ministry of Health in the area of Family Planning methods.

96. It has also been imperative to develop interagency collaboration between the Ministries of Public Health and Education to co-design IEC materials for the delivery in schools that included sexual and reproductive health education targeting adolescent girls and boys and paying special attention to prevention of teenage pregnancy. This has been complementary to the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme in all secondary schools which incorporates prevention of teenage pregnancy in the curriculum and preventative methods in relation to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. The Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association, an advocacy group for sexual and reproductive health and rights has also led in educating communities on family planning and its importance in nine administrative Regions of the country. Through UNFPA's collaboration with Women Across Differences (NGO) a 'Comprehensive Empowerment Programme for the reduction of adolescent pregnancy was initiated with over five hundred adolescents benefitting from the programme with a 90% percent success rate of no second or third pregnancy.

97. Another collaborative with UNICEF saw the development of the Youth Empowerment Initiative (YEI) designed for the underserved communities and isolated areas within the hinterland. The YEI has an extensive SRH component that also addresses teenage pregnancy. Specifically, the GOG which held adolescent health as a national priority established an Adolescent Health Unit (AHU) within the MOPH and took concrete actions that resulted in gains for young people especially girls. The AHU launched School Health Clubs in Region 10, as a pilot, then facilitated clubs in three other Regions and such clubs were established and implemented in 2016.

98. Suicide is a major epidemic that the GOG, in particular the Ministry of Health (MOPH) continues to address as a national health priority and welcomes partnerships to overcome the deficit of skilled professionals and facilities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 44.2 out of every 100,000 Guyanese take their own lives, with an average of 200 lives being lost each year due to suicide in the last five years. According to a recent study about suicidal behaviour in Guyana revealed that there were 673 suicide deaths from 2010 to 2012. Guyanese of East Indian descent account for 80 percent of cases of suicide and most of these cases are concentrated in coastal areas of the country (Regions 2, 6, 3, 4 and 5). The highest rate of suicide among Guyanese of East Indian descent was found in Region 2 (52.7 percent) followed by Region 6 (50.8 percent); and Region 3 (37.3 percent). Regions 7, 9 and 10 reported isolated cases of deaths by suicide. Annual suicide rates have been consistently highest in Region 2 (52.7 deaths per 100,000 persons) and Region 6 (50.8 suicide deaths per 100,000 persons). These were followed by the Region 3 (37.3 deaths per 100,000 persons), the Region 4 and Region 5 which are situated in the coastal part of the country.

99. This prevalence of this phenomenon is evident geographically for cases of attempted suicide as well. Statistical reports revealed an estimated ratio of 20–25 cases of suicide attempts for every suicide death. Information culled in a national study also revealed that the most affected age groups are individuals 12–18 years (30 percent) and 19–25 years (20 percent) which is consistent with most global epidemiologic reports. Females attempt suicide more frequently (75 percent) with a proportion of almost 3:1. Guyanese of East Indian descent accounted for 50 percent of cases (smaller proportion in comparison with actual suicides cases) and Guyanese of African descent accounted for 25.9 percent of cases. The high incidence of suicide attempts is concentrated in Regions 6, 5, 4, 3 and 2 with isolated cases occurring in the rest of Regions. Data also reveal that cases of suicide attempts occurred in the following groups of individuals: single people (60 percent), individuals without children (68 percent), and individuals living with family.

100. Generally, mental health services are available countrywide but the service is less than optimal due to lack of qualified full-time professionals. Services are

provided on an outreach basis during limited time periods to hinterland communities and isolated areas. Over the past five years, inadequate mental health services have posed a challenge to the reduction of suicide prevalence. GOG Is concerned about its capacity to appropriately address mental health patients in a timely manner. Steps are underway to operationalise the National Mental Health Action Plan 2015–2020 aligned with PAHO-WHO's global and regional frameworks for mental health and the priorities outlined in the National Health Sector Strategy 2013–2020 with special attention to results, indicators, and targets.

Article 13: Equal Access to Social and Economic Benefits

101. The major focus of the GOG to provide equal access to social and economic benefits was best demonstrated by the national budgets over the period that ensures benefits to all citizens. The philosophy of the previous Government was that allocations which benefit the family redound to the benefit of women. For example, investments in infrastructure that support access to health care and schools allow for lower cost of access to families; investments in infrastructure to support provision of potable water improve sanitation, reduce disease, and reduce the number of hours spent in care for children and household. The social sector continues to be a priority with national budgets and medium term development planning agendas as outlined in the responses in Article 4, paragraphs 55–58 and Article 14, paragraphs 120–125.

Article 14: Promotion of Equal Access and Participation of Rural Women

Health

102. Families throughout the hinterland and riverine areas have access to health services through 188 health posts, 136 health centres, 18 district hospitals and 6 regional hospitals. Health service delivery is enhanced by a Hinterland Coordinator from the Department of Regional Health Services within the Ministry of Public Health. Apart from the health infrastructure, the GOG has paid special attention to enhancing the skills of health professionals serving hinterland and rural communities. First responders like Community Health Workers (CHWs) have benefitted from training in microscopy to read malaria smears, as this disease has been a major public health challenge in hinterland communities.

103. Some of the main challenges to service delivery in these areas include balancing investments for health infrastructure in villages with the transient culture of Indigenous Peoples and skilled professionals willing to serve outside of urban centres. In some instances, doctors have been assigned to health centres with limited resource capability for treatment of patients or vice versa fully equipped theatres have been underutilized due to shortage of medical personnel and doctors. In other words, it is not uncommon to find furnished health centres or schools in villages that the majority of IP population abandoned in favour of another village with no facilities. On the other hand, it has been a challenge of successive governments to follow establish new health and other social services in communities considered isolated. These are communities with a total population of up to 250 persons and of more than 8 hours in distance (travel time from the centre of the community) from places with 1,000 or more inhabitants from each other.[11]

104. In response to health services demands in isolated communities the GOG has been implementing a roving surgical outreach programme and negotiated bilateral health agreements with neighbouring countries, Brazil and Suriname given the shared borders with these countries. Firstly, improved health service delivery in isolated communities involved a public/private partnership to establish a roving surgical

[11] (Government of Guyana 2015).

outreach programme, which travelled to isolated communities to perform general surgery as well as orthopaedics and gynaecology services. Secondly, the Guyana-Brazil agreement on provision of health services to border communities allows hinterland populations living close to Brazil, access to basic services although a referral must be initiated from a Regional Hospital in Guyana. Similarly, the Suriname-Guyana Cooperation Health Agreement includes access to health facilities and services to travellers and mobile populations, joint vaccine outreaches and health campaigns.

Education

105. Access to education for Indigenous Peoples (IP) living in hinterland and riverine communities has improved through the construction of nursery and primary schools and the provision of 13 secondary schools with dormitories for over 5,500 students in hinterland Regions. Access to local and international scholarships for students living in the hinterland to pursue secondary and tertiary education in various disciplines has also enhanced girls' empowerment. Teachers working in remote areas also receive incentives, and could participate in the Teacher Training Certificate Programme by distance education. Under the Amerindian People's Plan (APP), greater emphasis has been placed on mathematics, science and technology with the purpose of providing the young graduates with sufficient tools to be productively incorporated in the economy and enjoy sustainable livelihoods. The MOE recognised the imperative of broadening the education curriculum to include sports and creative arts with an emphasis on culture-specific skills like weaving, basketry in hinterland communities. The expected result is that these new subjects would increase the appeal of school to young people, contribute to increased attendance and lower the dropout rate.

106. The MOIPA that manages the Hinterland Scholarship Programme (HSP) for secondary and tertiary education has also been encouraging students in non-traditional areas of study and towards professions in demand for hinterland development including nurses and teachers. During 2011–2015, the majority (57 percent) of students who benefitted from the HSP were women and those who benefited from tertiary scholarship awards at the national level 42 percent were women as shown in Annex E.

107. Since its assumption to office in May 2015, the APNU-AFC government's recognisance of the barrier posed by inadequate transportation to and from school in hinterland, rural and isolated communities designed the 5 B's Initiative described under Article 4, paragraph 60 to mitigate this challenge.

Clean water and sanitation services

108. Indigenous Peoples (IP) and residents of hinterland and riverine communities have been vulnerable to the negative effects brought by mineral mining and climate change. Guyana banned gold mining directly from rivers in an attempt to address growing complaints of contaminated drinking water. Despite this ban it is still happening in some parts of the country which affects the main water sources for IP communities. GOG through the Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) and EPA has been expanding the prevalence of monitoring and sanctioned violations and non-compliance by errant private investors and large mining companies.

Income-generation projects

109. Mining is one of the major economic activities in the hinterland areas. The boom in worldwide gold prices during the period under review attracted both foreign investors and artisanal mining groups to Guyana. IP with titled community lands have the right in law and practice to benefit from commercial mining or issue permits to

prospectors. This process has been managed by the Amerindian Village Council (AVC) and becomes an income stream for the village to engage in community development projects that they so determine.

110. Rural women play an important role in agriculture which is integral to the development of the economy. Special programmes have been instituted to eradicate discrimination against women and as a result more women are now being recognized as farmers in their own right. In addition, more women are partners with men on household farms and are the main cultivators of kitchen gardens. Their involvement in domestic food production is particularly important, and they play a key role in contributing to food self-sufficiency.

111. During the period, a new Amerindian Development Fund portfolio within the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) provided funding to support socio-economic development for approximately 180 Amerindian communities/villages. In the first phase of funding, 26 hinterland communities and villages benefited from as much as GYD5Million for income generating projects endorsed by the community/village. Implementation of a number of these projects resulted in the enhancement of village infrastructure, tourism, manufacturing, business enterprise, mining, transportation services. Additional funding to rural and hinterland communities have been channelled through Presidential Grants intended to enhance the prospects of economic development of these communities. Between 2011 and 2014 the MOIPA awarded G$736,600.00 in the form of Presidential Grants. These grants funded projects such as the construction of village shops; passenger, cargo and fishing boats; the acquisition of mini-buses, tractors and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), among other ventures to improve the quality of life at the village level.

112. The State Party continues to address negative customs and traditional practices in rural and hinterland areas which affect the full enjoyment of rights by women through measures that empower all women. Additionally, rural and IP political participation in public life has been strengthened by visibility of women holding public office at national, regional and community levels. Currently, two (2) women of Amerindian heritage hold ministerial portfolios within the Ministries of MOIPA and Communities. Following the change of government in 2015, of the seven (7) Amerindian Members of Parliament, five (5) are female. The previous government (during 2011–2015) also had two (2) Amerindian women Ministers who held portfolios at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Amerindian Affairs, now MOIPA.

113. The GOG facilitated increased participation of Indigenous women through the establishment of the National Toshaos Council — the highest representative of the Amerindian communities according to the Amerindian Act 2006, Part IV, Sec. 41 — in development planning for hinterland communities. During the same period, the National Toshaos Council (NTC) elected a woman as chairperson for the first time during 2007–2012. The NTC as comprised of 186 elected Toshaos and senior councillors, of which 10 percent were women increased to 15 percent women in 2015. At the level of local government, women's representation on Amerindian Village Councils has also been expanding. As of June 2016, of 116 elected Toshaos, 25 percent were women.

114. Amerindian women hold the positions of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPC), which is mandated by the Guyana Constitution to promote Amerindian rights. Out of ten (10) commissioners, four (4) are women. This is in adherence to the Constitutional provision that of the three nominees from the National Toshaos Council "one must be a woman" and of the two nominees from the Amerindian organizations one must be a woman (Constitution 212 S, para b) in the constitution of members of the Indigenous Peoples' Commission.

Article 16: Marriage and Family Relations

Ensure de facto criminalization of early marriages

115. The Civil Law (Rights of Persons in Common Law Union act) 2012 was enacted in July 2012. (The Act) was enacted in July 2012. Section 2 (1) states that where a single woman and a single man have lived together in a common law relationship for not less than five years immediately preceding the death of either one of them and the person dies intestate, the surviving woman or man shall be entitled to the same power and rights regarding intestate succession as a widow or widower or a surviving wife or husband in the Civil Law of the Guyana Act the deceased Persons' Estate Act, or any other law relating to intestate succession. Therefore, in order for a person to qualify to apply for Letters of Administration under the act, she/he must satisfy two conditions; (a) both parties must be single at the time of cohabitation and (b) cohabitation must be for a period of not less than five years preceding the death of either one of them.

116. During 2011 to 2015, awareness-raising campaigns to better educate women about their rights under the Convention, regarding traditional negative stereotypes that prevent their free choice regarding reproductive health have been accelerated by NGOs working in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health. Notably the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) offered a range of sexual and reproductive health services; counselling, education and mentored youth advocates for sexual and reproductive rights. They provided 135,009 services in nine administrative regions of the country. During 2014 with support from the UNFPA, GRPA rolled out a National Family Planning Initiative in the coastal regions of Guyana with the aim of narrowing the family planning gap and addressing unmet needs. The project components covered in service provision, educating communities on family planning and its importance for balanced family life, community and society, and to build confidence among the women and men in the use of contraceptives. In total 3,649 persons benefitted directly, including community health workers and midwives. Women Across Differences in collaboration with UNFPA through its interventions to reduce adolescent pregnancy also advocated for family planning among the young mothers in several communities. One outcome of the Initiative was the establishment of 'The Young Mothers of Change' where schools and communities are targeted by the young mothers to interact with their peers on adolescent pregnancy reduction.

117. In 2014, the MOPH also collaborated with GRPA, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), and the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) to conduct a training-of-trainers of medical professionals for 20 doctors and 16 nurses who provide abortion services. The following year, the GRPA added an abortion anti-stigma training workshop with 30 youths and 5 adults. Young people, MSMs, sex workers and transgendered persons have also been key target populations of the campaigns. Last year alone 5,974 youths benefitted directly from the Teen and Youth Clinic, which provides a youth-friendly environment, services, education, training and counselling.

Other Concluding Observations

Recommendation 41: Data Collection

118. Guyana has yet to establish a core set of national indicators for monitoring progress of gender equality as outlined in paragraph 41 of the CO, but intends to pursue this initiative in the foreseeable future. Notwithstanding this monitoring and evaluation gap, the GOG utilised indicators related to the attainment of MDGs to assess and produce progress reports. Currently, data is compiled within statistical

departments of Ministries of Communities, Finance, Education, Health, Social Protection, Public Security and various institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, as well as the National Insurance Scheme, the Guyana Elections Commission, the Registrar General's Office which registers births, deaths and marriages and the Guyana Revenue Authority.

119. Over the past five years the Bureau of Statistics (BOS) Guyana has been making efforts to invest in data collection and data management systems in the social sector, the security sector and the financial sector and serves as the central repository for national statistics. Collaboration between UNFPA and BOS in conducting capacity enhancement training for its staff aimed at equipping the Bureau's personnel with the requisite knowledge of the Census and Survey Processing System (CSPro) software in preparation for the editing and cleaning of the census data during the verification stage of the data processing phase contributed to gender-specific analysis of National Census 2012. In 2013, UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Health, UNDP, UNFPA, PAHO/WHO and UNAIDS in the conduct of the MICS. In addition, UNICEF has been supporting the strengthening of data collection systems for education, health and child protection.

120. Additionally, the use of DevInfo in Guyana started in 2006 and was revitalized in 2012 to update Guyana's adaptation of DevInfo with available in-country data from all major sources since 2002 — Census, MICS, DHS and AIS — disaggregated by age, sex, location and ethnicity. A user training of 61 persons from government ministries, the CARICOM Secretariat, the Bureau of Statistics, the University of Guyana (both Campuses — Turkeyen and Tain), civil society organizations and the UN Agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNAIDS and IOM), was conducted to ensure in-country capacity for the utilization of GuyD_Info.

121. Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Security under the Citizen Security Programme funded by the IDB has established an Integrated Crime Information System to compile security and crime related information. When this project is fully implemented policy makers and other stakeholders implementing programs for women and girls will be able to assess gender-based violence trends and progress towards the realization of women's empowerment programs.

122. At the level of national planning, the Ministry of Finance has conducted training in monitoring and evaluation for officials of Ministries and government agencies to facilitate improved monitoring and evaluation of programmes being implemented in various sectors — education, health and social services. One of the main challenges to be addressed is inter-agency collaboration and standardised mandatory data collection utilising standardised tools across sectors to aggregate the gender mainstreaming impact from community to national level. Government is committed to implementing systems that could facilitate the electronic storage and cataloguing of relevant information to assist with access to data at the national level. Substantial efforts are still needed to build the capacity of the BOS to lead and coordinate data collection efforts to reorient and work effectively with other ministries, civil society and local communities.

Recommendation 42: Ratify the Optional Protocol

123. Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention is still under consideration by the Government of Guyana.

Recommendation 43: Amendment to Article 20

124. The State Party is still considering the acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

Recommendation 44: Beijing Platform for Action

125. The State Party intends to reinforce eleven relevant critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+20) to facilitate and further accelerate the implementation of the Convention. During the period under review, the GoG incorporated many critical areas in development plans with varying degrees of success. The critical areas more closely aligned with the MDGs proved to have more traction than others. In this vein, the public have been engaged through ongoing public education, training and sensitization programme.

126. Many stakeholders across several sectors have benefited from public education and gender-awareness sessions with specific reference to the Beijing Declaration conducted among women's and men's organisations, private and public sectors workers, non-governmental, community and faith-based organisations. Gender awareness and sensitisation reinforced the provisions of the Beijing+20 through national priorities and goals.

Recommendation 45: Millennium Development Goals

127. The GoG pursued strategic partnerships with international development partners to effectively translate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into concrete policies in line with paragraph 45 of the CO to fight poverty and improve the quality of life of people in Guyana. The State Party also recognised that integration of the gender perspective in key policies was imperative to the success of MDGs 2015, namely areas of women's empowerment, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education, reduction of child mortality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, and as well as environmental sustainability.

128. Guyana made progress towards Goal 1, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, but the proportion of people in extreme poverty must be further reduced if gender equality and the empowerment of women is to be substantial.[12] In terms of Goal 2, the target for universal primary education was achieved with boys and girls equally represented at primary level, even though fewer boys than girls completed secondary education.[13] Similarly, good progress was attained for Goal 3 to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Generally, women are well represented in public life and continue to seek senior level positions in the public and private sectors. Women's participation in the labour force has improved from 33 percent in 2006 to 42 percent in 2011.[14] The country also progressed towards targets for Goal 4 by reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds and universal immunization coverage.[15] Maternal health has been bolstered by improved universal antenatal care coverage and increased access to enhanced facilities contributed to progress towards achieving this goal. The key priority for advancing Goal 5 has been improving the quality of care offered by health care professionals to fully achieve the target.[16] One of the identified challenges has been the lack of authorisation for midwives to perform certain basic and emergency functions during the delivery process. This requires policy and program adjustments. In this regard, the review of the Midwives Legislation (Scope of Practice) in line with the International Confederation of Midwives standards and revision of the training curriculum benefited from the critical support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Pan American Health Organization-World Health Organization. As detailed in the MDGs Report 2011, there has been steady progress towards Goal 6 combatting the prevalence of HIV/AIDS,

[12] Ministry of Finance 2011, p. 1.
[13] Ibid, p. 17.
[14] Ibid, p. 25.
[15] Ibid, p. 33.
[16] Ibid, p. 41.

malaria and other diseases. By the end of 2011, the key priority for the Government of Guyana was to intensify HIV/AIDS activities to raise awareness, increase prevention, and improve treatment for key populations.[17] Guyana has been keen to integrate principles of sustainable development in national planning. Hence achieving Goal 7 by halving the proportion of the population with sustainable access to potable water and basic sanitation has notable successes and challenges due to issues of geography and infrastructural costs.[18]

129. In 2011 monitoring the progress of the Millennium Development Goals provided opportunities for re-prioritization of programmes, resources and technical assistance to allow the Government to accelerate progress on gender-related goals, more specifically Goal 5. Guyana presented both progress and final reports on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) meeting in July 2011 and July 2016.

Recommendation 46: Dissemination of the Report

130. The current government is committed to improving citizen engagement mechanisms as recommended by the Committee (paragraph 46) for dissemination and diffusion of future concluding observations and outcomes of documents from related fora. Since taking office a principal challenge had been locating a central repository of programmes and evaluations on the number of country-driven initiatives to empower women, men and children that have been implemented in the past five years. Coupled with this challenge is the coordinated approach among stakeholders that allows information sharing, data-informed advocacy, gender-sensitive budgets and strong national and local leadership to diffuse discussions around CEDAW, Beijing+20, SDGs and related obligations. Please also refer to *Visibility of the Convention* in paragraph 34 of this report for details of dissemination approach during the period under review.

Recommendation 47: Ratification of other treaties

131. Ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is still under consideration by the Government of Guyana. However, the State Party is pleased to note that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was ratified on June 25, 2015.

Recommendation 48: Technical assistance

132. In response to the Committee's recommendation (paragraph 48), the GOG is pleased to report that it has maintained constructive engagement with multilateral and bilateral partners to consolidate gains and accelerate programmes and plans in keeping with national goals and international obligations to advance women's rights and gender equality. Guyana has made considerable progress towards improving women's right through programme support from UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM (now UN Women), PAHO-WHO, CARICOM and IDB country programme cooperation agreements, support programmes and interventions on gender-based violence, child protection, health, education, environment and promotion of human rights with several Ministries and non-governmental organizations. Multilateral cooperation agreements including but not limited to the UNDAF (2012–2016); the UNICEF Country Programme Action Plan (2012–2016) and the PAHO-WHO Country Cooperation Strategy (2010–2015) have been mechanisms for maintaining international donor support and national planning with respect to implementing the

[17] Ibid, p. 49.
[18] Ibid, p. 60–61.

recommendations of the Committee. Technical assistance from bilateral partners CIDA, UKAID (formerly DFID), EU and USAID have also contributed to an enhanced legal framework, stronger institutional mechanisms, skilled professionals with related knowledge and improved programmes and services for women and girls affected by gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights, health, economy, environment, safety and security and TIPS.

Recommendation 49: Follow-up to concluding observations

133. The GOCRG has honoured its obligation to submit an interim report to the CEDAW Committee on steps to implement recommendations contained in Paragraphs 13 and 15 of CEDAW Concluding Observations 2012, and to respond to the Committee on Paragraphs 11 & 17 by July 2014, this was however sent in September 29, 2015.

Part III: Specific provisions to advance the CEDAW

Article 9: Equal Rights to Acquire, Change or Retain Nationality

134. The GOG, through the General Register Office (GRO) guarantees the right to a name and identity or recognition by name and nationality is provided for in the constitution and statute. Under the Birth and Death Act, Chapter 44:01, birth registration is free but a fee is paid for the certificate. This is in an effort to ensure that girls and boys are given a nationality from birth. The October 2011 UNICEF/ Rights of the Child Commission's "Report of Assessment, Policy, Practice of Birth Registration" showed that 91 percent of all children's births under the age of 5 were registered. The report found no gender disparity with regard to birth registration, 51 percent of girls were registered. In order to achieve universal birth registration, approximately two hundred (200) decentralized registration centres have been established throughout the country and staff of General Register Office are also required to visit hinterland and riverine villages and ensure all births are registered. The General Register Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages, works specifically with the Community Development Officers in the Welfare Department of the MOIPA to facilitate late birth registration for Indigenous Peoples whose births were never registered and do not possess a birth certificate. Late registration of births is a mechanism for ensuring that children born before 2000 and who were never registered can do so with support from MOIPA. Birth certificates are essential for citizens to access other social services and to exercise their political right to vote.

135. Through the Immigration and Passport Office, the GOG continues to honour its commitment to grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. Married women may retain their maiden names, assume their husband's name or use a combination of their maiden name and their husbands' surname. A divorced woman is free to continue to use her husband's name or revert to her maiden name.

Article 15: Equality in Legal and Civil Matters

136. The State Party wishes to inform the Committee that there is no restriction on the movement of persons in law or practice. Women have equality with men before the law (the Constitution allows this) and they continue to enter contracts and administer property equally in all stages of the procedures in courts, civil and commercial enterprises.

137. Pursuant to Article 148(1) of the Constitution, all persons continue to have the right to move freely in Guyana and to reside in any part of the country. There is no distinction on the basis of sex. The Constitution places no restrictions on residence; therefore marriage does not limit a woman's right to choose her residence. A woman's

domicile is not dependent on that of her husband as she has the right to citizenship in Guyana by virtue of birth or descent. She may also obtain citizenship, if she so chooses, by registering as a citizen based on marriage to a citizen of Guyana. A woman retains her domicile of origin, that is, where she is a citizen of Guyana by birth or under the principle of domicile of choice, unless she renounces her citizenship.

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